critical digest

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NEWSLETTER SERVICES

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New York Theatre Diary

The Little Hut- Coronet 10/7/53. John C Wilson and H M Tennent,Limited present a new play by Andre Roussin adapted from the French by Nancy Mitford. Directed by Peter Brook, cast includes Roland Culver, Anne Vernon, Colin Gordon, John Granger. Plot concerns a man, his wife and her lover, cast ashore on a desert isle. Play was a London hit starring Robert Morley.

Current Theatre Reviews

Tea and Sympathy-Barrymore 9/30/53. Brillant, sensitive and sentimental acting and playwrighting were lauded in all but one of the NY daily drama critics reviews. Playwrights Company production of Robert Anderson's drama was credited by most as the first hit of the season, the kind of show which restores the art of the theatre. Deborah Kerr and John Kerr(no relation) were applauded by all. Elia Kazan's direction also rated a share of the praise. Atkinson,Times,summed up the proceedings as a troubled idyll with a light touch and a wealth of understanding. While Kerr(also no relation) Herald Tribune credits cast and director for making it an exceptionally interesting exercise in theatre. Chapman,News,was pleased with the script which was written like a veteran and like a poet. 3 critics agreed that play about the problems of a student falsely accus of homosexuality was brillantly handled,but still voiced minor criticisms. Watts,Post, and WCBS Leonard thought the characters were too one-sided in their portrayals,all black or all white. While McClain,Journal American, thought the author suffered at times from over writing. Sole dissenter was Coleman,Mirror,who admitted the script never stirred his emotions as he felt it should. While the critic tabbed Kazan's direction less than brillant. He also noted that it took Miss Kerr a long time to develop the warmth expected. Because he anticipated more from the show, the critic was disappointed.

The Strong Are Lonely-Broadhurst 9/29/53--10/3/53. Though Fritz Hochwalder's religious drama of a Jesuit colony in 18th century Paraguay is a continuous hit in Europe, it lasted just 7 performances on Broadway. Split notices were accorded the Eva Le Gallienne script ,directed by Margaret Webster and produced by Walter Chrysler,Jr. Victor Francan,of the French cast, and Dennis King headed an all male cast which was praised by the majority of the reviewers. The difference of opinion arose as to whether the script was stimulating or boring. Coleman,Mirror, Watts,Post, Sheaffer,Eagle, found it stimulating and interesting. Atkinson,Times, found most of it of interest,but thought the final scene anti-climatic. The "con" side was lead by Kerr,Herald Tribune,who granted a few worthwhile scenes but thought the successes small and intermittent in an overripe treatment of a promising subject. Chapman,News, couldn't consider it more than a solemn,unexciting philosphical pageant. While Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun, believed it failed because it never really touched the onlooker. McClain,Journal American, found it a titanic and tasteful production, but he didn't know what it was about. Dash, Women's Wear, labeled it a static tract.

Out of Town Tryouts

Teahouse of August Moon will be a Broadway comedy hit with serious undertones, predicts Bone,Variety, after show's New Haven debut. All elements of Maurice Evans-George Schaefer were lauded.

Village Theatre

American Gothic, a dramatization by Victor Wolfson of his novel "The Lonely Steeple, will be produced at Circle in the Square starting Nov 6. The Grass Harp closes Oct 25. This is the first production of an original script by the group which is now in its fourth season.

The Emperor's Clothes will be revived by Greenwich Mews Playhouse starting Oct 22. ...Michael and his Lost Angel by Henry Arthur Jones will be produced at Amato Theatre starting Nov 16

Off Broadway

Climate of Eden will be revived by Current Stages starting Oct 6. Two complete casts will alternate...The Big Knife by Clifford Odets will be present by Playrads of City College Business School Oct 30-31.

Yiddish Theatre

Second Marriage, an "American-Yiddish" comedy-drama opens an active Yiddish season on Second Avenue. Show,which features its authors Irving Jacobson,Edmund Zayenda opens at Second Ave Theatre Oct 9...House on Grand Street has switched its opening at President to Oct 9.Theatre is now the "New Yiddish Theatre.

Vaudeville

Palace final show before Betty Hutton stand opens Oct 14 features Bert Howell and Frank Radcliffe, Marie Louise and Charles, The Rogers, Sasha Leonoff,The Kennys and Buddy Clayton. Tickets for 4 weeks of Hutton show now on sale.

Louis Armstrong and his All Stars with Les Baxter and his orchestrahead the new Paramount Bill opening Oct 7. Current stand withMindy Carson and Al Bernie applauded by trade reviewers.

Critics Elect

NY Drama Critics Circle re-elected their officers. Shipley,New Leader, president; Kerr,Herald Tribune, vice president; Freedley,NY Public Library, secretary,and Wenning,Newsweek,treasurer. Henry Hewes,associate drama critic of Saturday Review, was elected to membership. John Mason Brown will not be covering plays regularly for the magazine this season. The Circle also limited membership to publications"that are published in English and have their editorial offices in NYC."

Theatre Record Comments

Macbeth by Old Vic Company(RCA Victor) highly rated by Bron,Variety. Presentation featuring Guinness and Brown was prepared with much care and the result is a tense dramatic production.

Me and Juliet and Can-Can highlights released in back-to-back recordings by MGM, Decca and Columbia were all recommended by Wilson,Times. Ted Straeter MGM disc has vocals,while Gordon Jenkins orchestra handles the Decca record and the piano team of Ferrante and Teichman. The latter disc was picked as the best of the trio.

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Green Room Department

NATIONAL THEATRE...2 NY columnist chose up sides in a debate on the pros and cons of a national theatre. Rose,Mirror,is against such a project which he fears would be more boondoggie than boom, more blight than bonanza. His main reason is his belief that a political appointment would head any such project. But Gray, Post,argues that a federal subsidy to the theatre is no different than subsidies to airlines, chemists,etc. Latter also pointed out the fine job the WPA Federal Theatre did.

HED HOT MAMA...A well deserved tributeto Sophie Tucker, a great entertainer and a wonderful person, adds World Telegram & Sun editorial in honor of the Oct 4 testimonial dinner at the Waldorf Astoria. Almost every newspaper editorial page has lauded the performer during the past weeks.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...Judging from the success of World of Sholom Aleichem at the Barbizon Plaza Hotel ballroom, NBC Pearson suggests that the secret of success in the US theatre is to hire a hall, but keep away from Broadway...Some playgoers would have enjoyed A Pin To See The Peepshow, the English play which folded after its 1st performance, comments Chapman,News...More originality in the choice of scripts Jose Ferrer offered the public as possible City Center productions was urged by a Times Drama Mailbag reader.

NO PERFORMANCE AID...The theatre actor can now take out insurance for the time he may miss his salary check due to illness or accident, Smith,Billboard,details. Continental Casualty Company of Chicago has a Non Performance Policy which costs about $4.50 per $100 salary. It gives the actor his net take home pay for the duration of his lay-off, and stops when he gets well enough to work or if the show folds.

TALENT TIPS...Word that Take A Giant Step's Louis Gossett is making his 1st professional appearance and is still a student in high school indicates to Watts, Post,that acting is basically instinctive...Casts and staffs of End As A Man and Take A Giant Step are filled with talented newcomers,points out Coleman, Mirror.Palace Theatre should sigh Paul Duke, the magician in Anna Russell's recent revue, suggests Morehouse, World Telegram & Sun.

COLUMN TIPS...Sudden closing of Pin To See the Peepshow was shattering blow to play's star Joan Miller who is now in the hospital, reports Sobol, Journal American... Howard Cullman is a top backer in Kind Sir, hears Kilgallen,Journal American.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES...Actors Fund prexy Walter Vincent,age 85, is probably the theatre's most consistently winning investor, notes McHarry,News. This season the elder angel has $40,000 invested in such shows as Tea and Sympathy, Sabrina Fair, Solid Gold Cadillac, Girl Can Tell and Phfft.

Pros & Cons by TMK

Strong Are Lonely may not have been strong on plot, but it contained stimulating philosphical discussion. Developments of the arguments moved along dramatic lines. Luke warm kind reviews of NY critics which tabbed script "intellectual" didn't encourage fans to buy tickets.

Tea and Sympathy seemed to this observer on second night to be an obvious drama of very dull people. Most of the acting and writing cliches found in plays about homosexualty are included. The cast came alive only at brief intervals. The rest of the time they sledge hammered their points to the audience.

NYC Theatre News Round Up

"One man" shows are not usually profitable Broadway investments. The first entry of the season, Anna Russell and Her Little Show, opened to mild, favorable notices from the NY critics, but folded in 2 weeks with an estimated loss of $36,000. At Home With Ethel Waters, which opened to equally favorable, though mild, notices posted a closing notice. Unless business picked up over this week-end, the show would close. Victor Borge's "Concert in Comedy", which opened Friday, will be the determining factor in the plans of other producers considering "one man" presentations. If he also flops, the "one-man" shows will stick to the concert tour and road show fields.

Except for Charles Laughton's solo readings which play 2 or 3 nights at a time at Town Hall, almost none of the recent "one man" shows presented in NY were hits. Paris 90 didn't return its investors a profit because of the heavy productions, while Emlyn Williams' Dickens Readings lost money in NY. Beatrice Lillie was the sole exception to this trend.

Plays

Oklahoma closed at the NY City Center and opens a nationwide tour in Chicago on Oct 6...Guys and Dolls has switched back to its regular 8 30 PM Sunday curtain time ...Red Rainbow folded after 16 performances, Strong Are Lonely folded after 7... Paradise Question foldedin Philadelphia...Porgy and Bess has extended its NY run to Oct 24...2 plays scheduled to open Nov 3. Sherlock Holmes and A Trip to Bountiful... Kind Sir received mixed notices at New Orleans premiere.

People

Actors Equity raised dues to $24 per year. Council voted to expel any member proven by law to be a Communist...Lorne Greene, Canadian radio announcer who played "Big Brother" in CBS TV Studio One's "1984" signed for role in Prescott Proposals... Al Capp has resumed work on musical version of Li'l Abner.

Theatre Record Notes

Ethel Merman-Mary Martin "Ford Anniversary Show" duet issued by Decca in 3 speeds ...World of Sholom Aleichem recorded by Rachel Productions..."Sophie Tucker Golden Jubilee" limited edition album issued by Mercury.

Theatre Obits

Hugh Rennie, veteran actor last seen in Remains to Be Seen, hanged himself, age 50 ...Lee Ephraim, American born producer of London hits, died at age 76.

CRITICAL DIGEST
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